Message Text

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O R 091824Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO TREASURY DEPT WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 4 LONDON 2335

DEPARTMENT PASS FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD

TREASURY FOR DONALD E. SYVRUD, OASIA

E.O. 11652: N/A TAGS: ECON. UK

SUBJECT: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS - PERIOD, FEB. 3 - FEB. 9

SUMMARY: THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE

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LEVEL OF THE U.K.'S INTERNATIONAL RESERVES IN JANUARY. SHORT-TERM INTEREST RATES CONTINUED TO FALL, AND THE BANK OF ENGLAND FELT IT COULD NO LONGER TIE ITS MINIMUM LENDING RATE TO THE TREASURY BILL RATE. BANKING STATISTICS CONTINUE TO SHOW REDUCED LEVELS OF ELIGIBLE LIABILITIES. JANUARY WHOLESALE PRICE RISES WERE UNEXPECTEDLY LARGE. HIRE PURCHASE AND OTHER INSTALMENT CREDIT CONTINUES ITS

GROWTH. SURVEYS OF BUSINESS CONFIDENCE BY THE FINANCIAL TIMES AND THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRIES ARE CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC. END SUMMARY.

- 1. THE BANK OF ENGLAND, FINDING THAT IT COULD NO LONGER CONTROL THE DOWNWARD MOVEMENT IN THE MINIMUM LENDING RATE (MLR) SUSPENDED ITS NORMAL PROCEDURE FOR DETERMINING THE RATE. THE BANK DICTATED A 1/4 PERCENT REDUCTION TO 12 PERCENT IN THE MLR ON FEBRUARY 3, AVOIDING A MARKET DETERMINED REDUCTION THAT WAS EXPECTED TO BE MUCH GREATER. (SEE LONDON 2009.)
- 2. THE U.K.'S INTERNATIONAL RESERVES ROSE BY \$3,067 MILLION DURING JANUARY TO STAND AT \$7,196 MILLION. THIS LARGE INCREASE REFLECTS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE IMF DRAWING, UNWINDING OF LEADS AND LAGS, AND FLOWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ELIMINATION OF STERLING FINANCE OF THIRD COUNTRY TRADE. (SEE LONDON 1943.)
- 3. INTEREST RATES HAVE CONTINUED TO FALL DURING THE WEEK. YIELDS ON MONEY MARKET ASSETS OF UNDER THREE MONTHS SHOWED PARTICULARLY SHARP DECLINES ON THE ORDER OF 3/4 PERCENT. YIELDS ON GILTS ALSO DECLINED, ALTHOUGH BY ONLY 1/4 PERCENT ON THE LONGER ISSUES. THE MAJOR CLEARING BANKS LOWERED THEIR BASE LENDING RATE ANOTHER 1/2 PERCENT TO 12-1/2 PERCENT ON FEBRUARY 3. THE DIFFERENT RATES OF DECLINE FOR LONG AND SHORT-TERM YIELDS, AND THE RECORD LEVELS OF BIDS AT THE WEEKLY TREASURY BILL AUCTION ARE NOT UNEXPECTED, GIVEN THE HEAVY SALE OF GILTS UNCLASSIFIED

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OVER THE PAST MONTHS, COUPLED WITH THE SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION IN OUTSTANDING TREASURY BILLS.

4. THE BANK OF ENGLAND RELEASED ITS MONTHLY STATISTICS ON THE ELIGIBLE LIABILITIES, RESERVE ASSETS, RESERVE RATIOS AND SPECIAL DEPOSITS OF THE BANKING SECTOR FOR THE BANKING MONTH ENDED JANUARY 19. THE SEASONALLY UNADJUSTED FIGURES SHOWED A CONTINUED CONTRACTION OF THE BANKING SYSTEM'S LIABILITIES IN THE FACE OF HEAVY GILT SALES AND PROSPECTIVE PENALTIES IMPOSED BY THE "CORSET". THE CORSET REQUIRES THAT EXCESSIVE GROWTH IN INTEREST-BEARING ELIGIBLE LIABILITIES (IBEL) OVER AN AUGUST-OCTOBER BASE PERIOD BE OFFSET BY PROGRESSIVELY LARGER INTEREST-FREE DEPOSITS AT THE BANK OF ENGLAND.

LEVEL JAN. 19 CHANGE ON MONTH (MILLIONS OF POUNDS)

ELIGIBLE LIABILITIES 36,144 -732

IBELS 25,002 -429

SPECIAL DEPOSITS 1,082 -740

RESERVES 5,219 140

RESERVE RATIO 14.4 PERCENT 0.6 PERCENT
THE LARGEST CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF RESERVE ASSETS
WERE AN INCREASE OF 322 MILLION POUNDS IN MONEY AT CALL
IN THE DISCOUNT MARKET, AND A DECLINE OF 321 MILLION
POUNDS IN U.K. AND NORTHERN IRELAND TREASURY BILL HOLDINGS. BALANCES WITH THE BANK OF ENGLAND AND OTHER MONEY
PLACED AT CALL SHOWED SUFFICIENT INCREASES TO ACCOUNT
FOR THE OVERALL RISE IN RESERVES.

THE LARGE DECLINE IN SPECIAL DEPOSITS AND THE COMFORTABLE INCREASE IN THE RESERVES OF THE BANKING SYSTEM CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE BANK OF ENGLAND'S RELEASE OF APPROXMATELY 720 MILLION POUNDS IN SPECIAL DEPOSITS ON JANUARY 17, TWO DAYS BEFORE THE JANUARY 19 MAKE-UP DATE. THE PRESS POINTS OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THE BANKING SYSTEM AS A WHOLE IS WELL WITHIN THE CORSET NOW, THE LONDON

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CLEARING BANKS ARE NOT AND SPECULATES THAT THE CLEARERS WILL IN FACT ACCEPT SOME OF THE PENALTIES SPECIFIED BY THE CORSET RATHER THAN SQUEEZE THEIR BORROWERS EXCESSIVELY. SUCH SPECULATION SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE WEIGHED AGAINST THE ABILITY OF INTERBANK TRANSACTIONS TO EVEN OUT THE UNCLASSIFIED

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DISTRIBUTION OF IBELS WITHIN THE BANKING SYSTEM -THROUGH, FOR EXAMPLE, A LONDON CLEARING BANK'S LOAN TO
AN AFFILIATE BANK, WHICH LOAN IS REGARDED IN AN ACCOUNTING
SENSE AS AN OFFSET TO THE CLEARER'S IBELS AND AN
ADDITION TO THE AFFILIATE'S.

5. WHOLESALE PRICES. THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY RELEASED WHOLESALE PRICE STATISTICS FOR JANUARY WHICH SHOWED UNEX-PECTEDLY LARGE INCREASES. THE INDEX FOR MANUFACTURING OUTPUT PRICES INCREASED 3.2 PER CENT IN JANUARY OVER DECEMBER AND 19.6 PERCENT OVER JANUARY 1976. THIS EQUALS THE HIGHEST MONTHLY INCREASE ON RECORD, SET IN JANUARY 1975. THE INDEX FOR RAW MATERIAL AND FUEL PRICES INCREASED 2.5 PERCENT IN JANUARY OVER DECEMBER AND 29.3 PERCENT OVER JANUARY 1976. THESE SERIES ARE NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED AND THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY EXPLAINS THE LARGE INCREASES AS SPECIAL FACTORS SUCH AS THE NORMAL BUNCHING OF PRICE CHANGES IN JANUARY, TAX INCREASES ON ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO, AND SHARP FOOD PRICE RISES. THREE QUARTERS OF THE JUMP IN THE MATERIAL AND FUEL INDEX IS ASCRIBED TO OPEC'S DOLLAR PRICE INCREASES WHICH BECAME EFFECTIVE IN JANUARY.

THE PRESS DISCOUNTED THE SPECIAL FACTORS. AFTER THE DECEMBER FIGURES SHOWED ONLY A 1.1 PERCENT RISE IN OUTPUT PRICES AND AN 0.5 PERCENT DECLINE IN MATERIAL AND FUEL PRICES, A SUBSTANTIAL RISE IN JANUARY WAS ANTICIPATED BUT NOT OF THIS MAGNITUDE. THE FINANCIAL TIMES ASSERTED THAT THE OUTPUT PRICE INDEX INDICATED AN UNDERLYING MONTHLY RISE OF 1-1/4 TO 1-3/4 PERCENT, AND THAT ALTHOUGH THE DOLLAR PRICE OF OIL CERTAINLY ROSE IN JANUARY, THE MATERIAL AND FUEL INDEX MOVEMENT WAS CHECKED IN PART BY THE 2 PERCENT AVERAGE APPRECIATION OF STERLING BETWEEN DECEMBER AND JANUARY. THE TIMES INDICATES THAT THE JANUARY PRICE INCREASES WILL MAKE THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE TUC OVER THE NEXT STAGE OF INCOMES POLICY MORE DIFFICULT. THE MONTHLY SERIES IS QUITE VOLATILE, SO AN INDIVIDUAL UNCLASSIFIED

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MONTH'S LEVEL CANNOT SUPPORT CONCLUSIONS ABOUT TRENDS.

WHOLESALE PRICES

1970 EQUALS 100

OUTPUT PRICES OF MATERIALS PRICES AND FUELS 1976 Q 1 206.9 266.5 Q 2 214.4 292.6 Q 3 223.2 306.8 Q 4 233.9 329.9 R JANUARY 2 204.8 261.5 FEBRUARY 207.3 263.9 MARCH 208.6 274.2 SEPTEMBER 226.3 314.4 OCTOBER 230.0 327.7 NOVEMBER 234.6 R 331.8 DECEMBER R 237.2 330.1 1977

JAN P 244.9 338.2

P - PROVISIONAL

R - REVISED

PRICES ARE NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED, EXCLUDE PURCHASE TAX BUT INCLUDE REVENUE DUTIES.

6. THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY ON FEBRUARY 7 RELEASED STATISTICS ON HIRE PURCHASE AND INSTALMENT CREDIT CHANGES DURING DECEMBER. ALTHOUGH THE SEASONALLY ADJUSTED TOTAL OF NEW HIRE PURCHASE AND INSTALMENT CREDIT EXTENDED APPEARS TO HAVE LEVELLED OFF SINCE SEPTEMBER, THE GROWTH IN OUTSTANDING DEBT REMAINS HIGH -- SEASONALLY ADJUSTED IT GREW AT A 20.3 PERCENT ANNUAL RATE IN THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 1976, OUTSTRIPPING THEREBY INFLATION AND INCREASES IN

HIRE PURCHASE AND OTHER INSTALMENT CREDIT BUSINESS
POUNDS MILLIONS
POUNDS MILLIONS
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED
UNADJUSTED
TOTAL OF TOTAL DEBT OUTSTAND-

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FINANCE HOUSES (A) ING TO FINANCE HOUSES
& RETAILERS (B) & RETAILERS
NEW CREDIT CHANGE AMOUNT AT
EXTENDED IN DEBT CHANGE END OF PERIOD

1975 2,992 R -10 -10 2,320

1976 3,606 342 342 2,662

1976 Q 1 844 R 37 R -23 2,297
Q 2 875 R 79 R 66 2,363

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Q 3 915 R 106 R 102 2,465
Q 4 972 120 197 2,662
1976 AUG. 305 R 44 R 44 2,430
SEPT. 319 36 R 35 2,465
OCT. 310 R 36 R 54 2,519
NOV. 332 R 51 R 86 2,605
DEC. 330 33 57 2.662
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NOTES: A) DIRECT BUSINESS ONLY: I.E., EXCLUDING AGREE-MENTS BLOCK DISCOUNTED WITH FINANCE HOUSES BY RETAILERS.

- (B) DURABLE GOODS SHOPS, DEPARTMENT STORES AND "OTHER INSTALMENT CREDIT RETAILERS".
- (R) REVISED FIGURES.

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TREASURY FOR DONALD E. SYVRUD, OASIA

7. THE FINANCIAL TIMES PUBLISHED ITS MONTHLY SURVEY OF BUSINESS OPINION FOR JANUARY ON FEBRUARY 7. THE SURVEY RESULTS ARE PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF FOUR MONTH MOVING AVERAGES, AND THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE USUALLY GIVEN CHOICES THAT DO NOT ALLOW A GREAT DEAL OF PRECISION. ONE UNCLASSIFIED

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WOULD NOT EXPECT. AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE SURVEY RESULTS TO DRAMATICALLY CHANGE EACH MONTH. THIS MONTH'S RESULTS DO NOT, BUT THEY MAY POINT TO THE EMERGENCE OF SKILLED STAFF SHORTAGES IN A PERIOD OF CONTINUED HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, AND TO THE RECRUDESCENCE OF INFLATIONARY EXPECTATIONS.

BUSINESS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IS INTERPRETED TO HAVE IMPROVED IN JANUARY AND DECEMBER, (ANY MONTH NOTED HERE REFERS TO THE AVERAGE OF FOUR SUCCESSIVE MONTHS ENDING IN THE CITED MONTH), BUT TO BE ABOUT THE SAME LEVEL AS IN NOVEMBER. THIS RESULT IS NEGATIVE IN THAT THE WEIGHT OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE LAST THREE SURVEYS WERE LESS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR COMPANY'S PROSPECTS THAN THEY WERE 12 MONTHS AGO.

PROSPECTS THAN THEY WERE 12 MONTHS AGO. EIGHTY-FOUR PERCENT OF EXPORTING COMPANIES IN THE JANUARY SURVEY EXPECT THAT EXPORTS WILL IMPROVE DURING THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS COMPARED WITH 90 PERCENT IN DECEMBER. THE TREND OF NEW ORDERS DURING THE LAST FOUR MONTHS WAS SAID TO BE UP BY 58 PERCENT OF THOSE RESPONDIMG, ABOUT THE SAME RESPONSE GIVEN IN THE THREE PREVIOUS SURVEYS. THE EXPECTED LEVELS DURING THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS OF RAW MATERIAL AND COMPONENT STOCKS DO NOT SHOW ANY CHANGE. WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUS SURVEYS. STOCKS OF MAN-UFACTURED GOODS ARE GINGERLY EXPECTED TO INCREASE OVER THE YEAR WHICH IS AGAIN CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUS SURVEYS. INVESTMENT ATTITUDES APPEAR TO HAVE CHANGED LITTLE. FORTY-TWO PERCENT EXPECTED AN INCREASE IN THE VOLUME OF INVESTMENT OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS, COMPARED WITH 39 PER-CENT IN DECEMBER AND NOVEMBER. AND 46 PERCENT IN OCTOBER. EXPECTATIONS OF IMPROVING PROFIT MARGINS APPEAR TO HAVE CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE IN JANUARY, BUT EXPECTA-TIONS OF IMPROVED EARNINGS ON CAPITAL ARE HOLDING STEADY.

THE ONLY LARGE CHANGES IN RESPONSE TO "THE FACTORS CURRENTLY AFFECTING PRODUCTION," WERE THAT SKILLED FACTORY STAFF WAS MENTIONED BY 33 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS IN UNCLASSIFIED

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JANUARY COMPARED WITH 26 PERCENT IN DECEMBER, 24 PERCENT IN NOVEMBER, AND 16 PERCENT IN OCTOBER, AND EXECUTIVE STAFF WAS MENTIONED BY 13 PERCENT IN JANUARY COMPARED WITH 3 PERCENT, 4 PERCENT AND 1 PERCENT IN THE PRECEDING MONTHS. THESE STAFF SHORTAGES ARE ONE OF THE FEW BOTTLE-NECKS TO EMERGE IN A PERIOD OF GENERAL EXCESS CAPACITY. THE BALANCE OF OPINION IN THE SURVEY SEEMS TO HAVE SHIFTED TOWARD EXPECTATIONS OF HIGHER WAGE INCREASES. EXPECTATIONS HAVE CHANGED AS:

THIS SHIFT HAS NOT, HOWEVER, MANIFESTED ITSELF IN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE PATTERN OF RESPONSES ABOUT UNIT COSTS.

8. THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY PUBLISHED ITS QUARTERLY INDUSTRIAL TRENDS SURVEY ON FEBRUARY 9. THE SURVEY HAD MIXED RESULTS, BUT ON BALANCE SHOWD INCREASED OPTIMISM ABOUT INDUSTRIAL PROSPECTS. AN INCREASED PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS IN THIS SURVEY COMPARED WITH THE SUR-VEY PUBLISHED IN OCTOBER INDICATED THAT THEY EXPECT TO AUTHORIZE MORE EXPENDITURE ON BOTH PLANT AND MACHINERY. AND BUILDINGS OVER THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS THAN OVER THE LAST TWELVE. THERE WERE ALSO INCREASES IN THE PERCENT THAT ASSESSED AN UPWARD TREND DURING THE PAST AND COMING FOUR-MONTH PERIODS IN THE VALUE AND VOLUME OF OUTPUT, AND IN THE VALUE OF NEW ORDERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WERE DECLINES IN THE PERCENT THAT EXPECTED THE TREND OVER THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS TO BE POSITIVE FOR THE VALUE OF EXPORT DELIVERIES AND NEW ORDERS, WHILE EXPORTERS' OPTIMISM SEEMS UNCLASSIFIED

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TO HAVE DECLINED FROM THE OCTOBER LEVEL. THERE WAS A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE (39 TO 47 PERCENT) OF THOSE RESPONDING THAT U.K. PRICES RELATIVE TO OVERSEAS PRICES WOULD LIMIT EXPORTERS ABILITY TO OBTAIN ORDERS OVER THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS.

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9. EXCHANGE RATE AND GOLD

EFFECTIVE

EXCHANGE DEPRECIATION GOLD

DATE RATE (\$) (PERCENT) (\$) 2/2 1.7163 42.7 132-1/8

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PAGE 02	LOND	ON 02335	04 OF 04	092139Z
2/3	1.7135	42.7	132-7/8	

 2/4
 1.7150
 42.7
 132-3/8

 2/7
 1.7145
 42.8
 134-3/8

2/8 1.7160 42.8 134-3/4

CHANGE 2/1-2/8 UP 0.0010 UNCHANGED UP 2-1/8

10. FORWARD DISCOUNT ON STERLING

DATE	1 MO	NTH	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS
2/2	1.08	3.20	5.41	
2/3	1.10	3.27	5.43	
2/4	1.12	3.35	5.52	
2/7	1.15	3.43	5.75	
2/8	1.13	3.45	5.90	

CHANGE 2/1-2/8 NARROWED 0.12 WIDENED 0.08 WIDENED 0.35

(ALL FIGURES IN CENTS)

11. EURODOLLAR INTEREST RATES

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.,	$\boldsymbol{\mu}$		7

2/2	4-7/8	5-1/8	5-5/8
2/3	4-1/2	5-1/16	5-5/8
2/4	9-/"-	5-1/16	5-1/2
2/7	4-3/4	5-1/8	5-5/8
IBWXI	4-3	3/4 5	5-1/2

CHANGE 2/1-2/8 UP 1/16 DOWN 1/4 DOWN HOEXI

12. THREE-MONTH LONDON INTERBANK - EURODOLLAR INTEREST RATE DIFFERENTIAL

DATE

2/2	7-1/4
2/3	7-1/4
2/4	7-9/32
2/7	7-1/32
2/8	7-1/8

CHANGE 2/1-2/8 DOWN 1/2

$13. \ STERLING \ CERTIFICATES \ OF \ DEPOSIT$

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DATE	1 MON	TH 3 N	MONTHS	6 MONTHS	
2/2	12-25/32	11-31/32	2 11-1/2		
2/3	12-1/8	11-21/32	11-13/16		
2/4	12	11-5/8	11-3/8		
2/7	12-3/32	11-23/32	11-7/16		
2/8	12-5/32	11-11/16	11-15/32		
CHANC	E 2/1-2/8	DOWN 2	1/32 DOWN	3/4 DOWN	7/64

14. THE MINIMUM LENDING RATE WAS SET AT 12 PERCENT BY THE BANK OF ENGLAND ON FEBRUARY 3, A FALL OF 1/4 PERCENT FROM THE MLR ESTABLISHED AT THE JANUARY 28 TREASURY BILL AUCTION. THE FEBRUARY 9 TREASURY BILL AUCTION SAW THE TREASURY BILL RATE FALL 0.5100 PERCENT TO 11.2286 PERCENT, AS 1452.26 MILLION POUNDS IN BIDS WERE RECEIVED FOR 300 MILLION POUNDS TENDERED. THIS WEEK 300 MILLION POUNDS

ARMSTRONG

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am Channel Indicators: n/a **Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED** Concepts: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REPORTS Control Number: n/a Copy: SINGLE Sent Date: 09-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am Decaption Note: Disposition Action: n/a Disposition Approved on Date: Disposition Case Number: n/a Disposition Comment:

Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am Disposition Event: Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LONDON02335
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Review Exemptions: n/a **Review Media Identifier:** Review Release Date: n/a Review Release Event: n/a Review Transfer Date: Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a

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Subject: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS - PERIOD, FEB. 3 - FEB. 9 SUMMARY: THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE

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